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The Aramaic pantheon of Taymā'

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This article discusses the origin of three Semitic deities which are attested in the Aramaic inscriptions in the North Arabian city of Taymā'. These are *Ṣalm*, *Sangilā* and *Ašīmā*. Together they comprise the pantheon of Taymā'. The etymology, identity and the attestation of these deities in Aramaic and other sources are investigated. After studying these three deities within their Semitic background, this paper suggests that these deities, which had been adopted by Arabs in Taymā', are of Aramaic origin and were introduced to North Arabia from North Syria.

In 1880, an Aramaic stele and other Aramaic inscriptions were discovered in Taymā'. The stele records the introduction of a new cult of a god called *ṣlm*, *Ṣalam* / *Ṣalm* of Hagam in Taymā'. Two other deities are also mentioned, along with *ṣlm* – *'šym'* and *śngl'*. Recently, more Aramaic inscriptions have been found in Taymā', among them also a stele mentioning the same deities. The deities *Ṣalam*, *Ašīmā* and *Śangilā* are not of Arabian origin. Scholars have attempted to pinpoint the origin of these deities to Mesopotamia and Nabonidus's stay in Taymā', which seems plausible. Anyhow, they maintain that *Ṣalam* is a deity introduced from Mesopotamia into Taymā'. The oldest reference to *Ṣalam* in North Arabia is found in the Aramaic inscriptions of Taymā' and in personal names. Until the recent discovery of the Aramaic inscriptions, *'šym'* was read as *'šyr'*, and researchers believed it to be the Canaanite *'šyr'* (1). With the finding of these inscriptions, *'šyr'* was corrected to read *'šym'*. Researchers have tried to interpret *śngl'* as a compound with the name of the moon-god of Mesopotamia, *Sîn*. The following will demonstrate that these three deities are Aramaic and originate from Syria.

The Aramaic Pantheon

Writing about the Aramaic pantheon is a difficult task, not only because of lack of evidence about the early Aramaic deities, but also because little is known of the early history of the Aramaeans. The most important sources for the early Aramaic pantheon are the Akkadian texts, Aramaic inscriptions, and Biblical and Classical references. The Akkadian texts give us some information about Aramaic deities, in particular those of Akkadian provenance, such as Aramaic *nb'* / *nbw* ⇐Akkadian *Nabû*. We do not know exactly which deities were worshipped by the Aramaeans in the 2nd millennium BC because these details have not yet been found in the written sources. In the Old and Imperial Aramaic inscriptions (*c.* 1000–300 BC), we have neither mythological texts nor psalms like those of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Ugarit or the Old Testament. However, we can say that these texts contain religious information. The Old Aramaic inscriptions from various places give us information about the Aramaic deities: from Tell al-Fakhiriya the deities *hdd*, *nyrg*l, *swl* (2), from Zinğirli *rkb'l* and *'rqršp*, *'l*, etc.; from Hamat in the Zakkūr inscription *'tršmyn*, *'lwr*, *šmš*,

śhr; and from deity lists of Arpad in the Sfire inscriptions *mlš, mrdk, zrpnt, nb', tšmt, nśk, nrgl, lṣ, šmš, nr, sn, nkl*, etc. (3).

The Aramaic religion developed with the beginning of the first millennium and the emergence of the Aramaic states. This development can be traced from different sources of the Aramaic religion, which inform us about the religion of these states and the various deities of the dynasties which governed them. Therefore, we can speak of different local deities, that is different Aramaic pantheons. For example, the Aramaic god *rkb'l*, the main god of the Aramaic Dynasty of Zinğirli, is a local deity which can only be found in Zinğirli. We also know that the Aramaic moon-god *ś'* (⇐Akkadian *Sîn*), which also has the Aramaic name *śhr*, had a main temple in Harran (4), as well as the fact that *hdd* was primarily worshipped in Damascus (5). It is interesting to observe that most of the Old Aramaic inscriptions were set up by Aramaic kings, except for the inscriptions of Nerab written by priests (6).

In addition to the local Aramaic deities and the local pantheons, the Aramaeans adopted foreign deities as early as the beginning of the first millennium BC, particularly gods from Mesopotamia such as *mrdk* (⇐Akkadian *^{d}Marduk*) *nrgl* (⇐*^{d}Nergal*), *nkl* (⇐*^{d}Nikkal*⇐*^{d}NIN.GAL*), and others. The Aramaeans also adopted northwestern Semitic deities like *Haddu / Hadad*, Canaanite gods such as *ršp* and *mlqrt*, as well as deities from Asia Minor like *kbb'* (7).

Historically, the Aramaean states were not unified politically. It is well known, however, that their cultural influence in the Ancient Near East was great. From approximately the beginning of the 7th century BC, most of the Aramaic states lost their political independence through the Assyrian domination of the Ancient Near East. The Aramaeans spread throughout the whole of this region and formed a major part of the population of the Assyrian Empire and, later, the New Babylonian Empire, the Aramaic language becoming the *lingua franca* of the Ancient Near East. The continuing influence of the Aramaic deities in the Hellenistic and Roman period must also be taken into account (8), for example the Aramaic goddess *Atargatis* (⇐Aramaic *'tr+'t'*) in Hierapolis.

Lucian gives us important information about the cult of the Aramaic god *Hadad* (9). Palmyrenian, Hatraean, and Old Edessean inscriptions also testify that the worship of Aramaic deities continued throughout this period. These traditions can be followed up to the early Islamic period in Harran, where *Sîn* had been worshipped until that time. All these facts had a formative influence on the Aramaic pantheon. In spite of all these problems, we should not only consider local Aramaic deities but also look at the common Aramaic pantheon which gives some difficulties. It is possible to say that *Hadad* was a kind of national god. However, defining the role and function of many of the Aramaic local deities still remains a problem. It is within this context that we must look for the identity of the deities of Taymā'.

The Pantheon of Taymā' ('lhy tym')

The Aramaic inscriptions from Taymā' mention three deities together in the following order: *ṣlm, śngl', 'šym'* (10). This trias of deities is not attested in other Aramaic documents, except *'šym'*, which is always found compounded with *byt'l* in the Imperial Aramaic texts from Egypt.

The old Taymā' stele found 1880 (11)

- The deities of Taymā' in the order *ṣlm zy mḥrm, śngl'* and *'šym'* give their consent to the introduction of *ṣlm zy hgm*.
- The deities of Taymā' offer protection for Taymā'. Anyone who destroys the monument would be uprooted, he him-

self, his seed and his posterity, from Taymā'.
- The deities of Taymā' *ṣlm zy mḥrm, śngl'* and *'šym'* give as a grant for the *ṣlm* of *hgm* 16 palm trees from the temple estates and from the king's domain.

The newly discovered Taymā' stele 1979 (12)
- This inscription records the erecting of a temple for *ṣlm zy rb*
- It also gives information about the setting up of a throne in front of *ṣlm zy rb* as a postament for *śngl'* and *'šym'*.

I. ṢALAM

The etymology and identity of ṣlm

In Semitic the word *ṣlm* means "statue, relief, drawing, figurine, likeness, image,"(13). In the Old Aramaic inscription of Tell al-Fakhiriya the words *dmwt'* and *ṣlm'* are both used for "image" (14). It is really not clear whether *ṣlm* is in any way related to the Arabic *ẓlm* "darkness". More recently, Dalley has collected evidence on the divine *ṣlm* proving that the god *Ṣalm* is a sun deity. She maintains that the term *ṣlm* refers to the divine symbol of a wing-disc on which the loyalty oath to the king and his family would be sworn (15). In Akkadian it is also possible that *Ṣalmu* is a statue of the king, a deity or of religious importance.

According to the cuneiform attestation of *ṣlm*, *ṣlm* has the *qatl* or *qatal*-form, the two readings *Ṣalm* or *Ṣalam* are correct. This form for deity names is found in the early Semitic pantheon, for example, *Šamš* and *Šamaš*, but especially in the Aramaic Pantheon such as *hd*/*Haddu*, *hdd*/*Hadad* and *śhr*/*Śahr* or *Śahar*. *Ṣalm* is an example of this class of names which is more common in the West Semitic than in Akkadian.

The identity of the god *Ṣalmu* has been discussed by several researchers (16), especially whether it was a sun or a moon deity (17). Most researchers have concentrated on the figures on the Taymā' stelae, establishing the identity of the god *Ṣalmu* (18). It is difficult to accept the suggestion of Beaulieu that the worshipping of *Ṣalmu* is the same as that of the divine king, Nabonidus (555–539 BC) (19). The deity *Ṣalmu* was known before the time of Nabonidus.

The sources:

Ṣalmu in the Akkadian sources. *Ṣalmu* is found in the following sources:

a. The god *Ṣalmu* is West Semitic, entered Mesopotamia and the Babylonian / Assyrian pantheon with the other West Semitic deities like *Milk*, *Ṣādiq*, *Šālim*/*Šalmān* (20).

b. The Alalakh text AT 366 mentions the god *Ṣalmu* (^{d}*ALAM*) (21), and ^{d}*Ṣa-al-mu* is also found in Middle Babylonian text from Bogazköy (22).

c. Middle and New Assyrian: *Ṣalmu* occurs many times in deity lists from this period (23). *Ṣalmu* is given as a name or by-form of *Šamaš*, *AN*$^{\text{Ṣa-lam}}$*DÙL=ditto*(^{d}*UTU*), and the same information is repeated on two other lists (24). ^{d}*Ṣalmu* occurs also in the Assyrian deity lists and occasionally together with *Ṣalam-šarri*. In general, it is understood as "(divine) of the king" (25). However, it is not clear whether ^{d}*Ṣalam-šarri* is a variation of ^{d}*Ṣalmu*, so this must remain questionable.

d. A feminine deity, *Ṣalimutu*, of *Ṣalmu* is found in personal names, such as in *Ṣa-li-mu-ti-mu-še-zib-tum* (26).

Ṣalmu in Akkadian personal names. Dalley (27) collected the compound names with *Ṣalmu* without making a distinction between the West Semitic names and Akkadian names in the cuneiform texts. The following examples are Akkadian names: ^{d}*BE-ṣal-mu-DINGIR.MEŠ* "Ea-is-the-Very-Image-of-Godhead", *Ṣal-mu-PAP.MEŠ*(=*aḫḫē*) "Likeness-of-(his-dead)-Brothers" (28), ^{d}*Ṣalmu-šarrī-iqbi* (29) and others (30). It is obvious that in the Akkadian names *Ṣalmu* is not a theophoric element and does not in any way

represent the god *Ṣalmu*. The compound names with ^{d}*Ṣalmu* are definitely West Semitic according to the other parts of the names.

Ṣalmu in Aramaic personal names in the Akkadian texts. The names compounded with the god *Ṣalmu* are only attested in the New Assyrian period from North Syria, primarily from the region of Harran. The examples are the following: ^{d}*Ṣalmu-im-me* **ṣlm'my* "*Ṣalmu* is with me" (31). Such Aramaic names occur in New Assyrian, for example *Adad* (^{d}*IM*)*-im-me*, *Adad* (^{d}*IM*)*-i'-me* (32), see further *Ṣalmu*^{mu}*-ḫe-ni* "*Ṣalmu* is gracious", *Ṣalmu*^{mu}*-ḫi-ni*, the root *ḥnn* (33), *Ṣa-lam-èl*, *Ṣa-lam-ìl* "*Ṣalam* is god", *Ṣalmu-ma-lik* "*Ṣalmu* is king" (34).

Ṣalmu in Ugaritic texts. In Ugaritic *ẓlmt* is the name of the mother of a heavenly messenger (35). It is not certain whether a god *ẓlm* existed in Ugaritic or not (36). It seems, however, that in the Ugaritic personal names, the term *Ṣalmu* is used in general, and, as in Akkadian, has nothing to do with the god *Ṣalmu*. The examples are: *Addu* (^{d}*IM*)-ṣa-al-mi "*Addu* is my likeness" (37), as well as *Ṣa-al-me-ki* (= *ṣlm* + *'k*) "my orphan is black"(38).

Ṣalm in the Aramaic inscriptions. There is no obvious evidence of the god *ṣlm* in the Aramaic documents from Syria, Mesopotamia or Egypt. The only Aramaic references for *ṣlm* are from North Arabia, namely from Taymā'. *ṣlm* is the main god in Taymā'; he is always placed at the beginning of the inscription, and he appears in different forms just like *Ba'l*, e.g. *Ba'l-Šamain*, *Ba'l-Ḥarran* etc.

The attested forms are: *ṣlm zy mḥrm*, *ṣlm zy hgm*, *ṣlm zy rb*. It is likely that these forms are composed of *ṣlm* + toponomic name. The particle *zy* indicates a marking of a local deity. Compound deity names with *d/ḏt* (*ḏū*/*ḏāt*) are found in South Arabic, North Arabic and Aramaic. In a dedicatory Aramaic inscription from Taymā' (39), a person called *Ma'anān*, son of *'Amrān*, made an offering to the god *Ṣalm* (*ṣlm 'lh'*).

The first *ṣlm* mentioned in Taymā' is *ṣlm zy mḥrm*, and from his description, *ṣlm* of Maḥram does not seem to be of Taymanite origin. There is no clear evidence when this god was introduced into Taymā', although it might have been some time during the 8th century BC. It has been suggested that Maḥram has to be Maḥrama, which was a locality in Ǧabal Salmā nearby Taymā', mentioned by Yāqūt (40).

The introduction of *ṣlm zy hgm* is recorded in the Taymā' stele (41); the inscription informs us about the sanctuary of *Ṣalm* of Hagam. The priest, *Ṣalamšezeb* or perhaps his father introduced the new deity to Taymā'. Yāqūt also mentions a place al-Hağam in Yemen (42). Al-Hağam is also the name of a water spring for the Banī Fazāra dug by 'Ād (43).

The god *ṣlm zy rb* has been found in the newly discovered Aramaic stele from Taymā'. Here, it is documented that a temple was built for this god.

It is interesting to have information on the introduction of deities like those of Taymā'. Nevertheless, there is some information in the Aramaic texts on the setting up of a temple for a deity. For example, the king Zakkūr of Hamat records that he had built temples for the gods throughout his whole land. Furthermore, we have another example about the building of a temple for Yahwe in the Aramaic texts from Egypt (44).

The name of the priest *ṣlmšzb* means "(the god) *Ṣalm* has saved" or "*Ṣalm* save (me)". Many researchers consider the name *ṣlmšzb* to be an Akkadian name. However, according to the discussion above in which *Ṣalm* is not attested as a theophoric element in Akkadian, this name is unquestionably

an Aramaic name. Moreover, it is correct that *šzb*, which is of Akkadian origin, was borrowed by Imperial Aramaic and was later found in all Aramaic dialects (45). In Imperial Aramaic, *šzb* is a typical Aramaic element, and should not be considered Akkadian (46).

The name of the father of *Ṣalmšezeb*, *pṭsry*, is certainly an Egyptian name. Recently, Aggula has suggested (47) – and he is supported in this point by Livingstone (48) – that the name *pṭsry* must also be an Akkadian name through a metathesis: *pṭsry*⇐*ṭbsry*⇐*ṭubšarri* "scribe". This suggestion is not tenable, because the names do not always indicate the national community of the bearer. We know from New Assyrian and New Babylonian texts that Babylonians and Assyrians gave their children Aramaic names and *vice versa*. We also know that in Egypt Aramaeans gave their children Egyptian names, which indicates that *pṭsry* does not necessarily mean that the person was Egyptian as in the case of *Ṣalmšezeb*. It is obvious that *pṭsry* was an Aramaean person. Compound names with *ṣlm* are not to be found in other Aramaic groups of inscription. The Palmyrene names *ṣlmy* and *ṣlm'* (49) can be compared with *Ṣalmu* names.

Ṣalm in the Thamudic inscriptions (Taymanite inscriptions). More than 24 inscriptions mention the god *Ṣalm* in what is called by Winnett "Taymanite inscriptions" from the sites around Taymā' (50). Other inscriptions from Jordan and Najran also record the deity *ṣlm* (51). All these inscriptions give some information about the worshipping of *Ṣalm* around Taymā'.

The Taymanite inscriptions mention persons who were involved in war against *ddn* (*Dīdān*), *nbyt* (**Nabayāt*) and others (52). The formal *nṣr lṣlm* "supported *Ṣalm*" is used in these inscriptions, and it seems that *Ṣalm* led these wars (53). In the Ancient Near East, the deity as a leader in war is well known; Kang did his research on the divine war in the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament, and Weippert discussed this in Assur and in the Bible, and the Arabic author Ibn al-Kalbī recorded this in Arabia (54). Winnett discussed *nṣr*, Arabic *naṣara* "to help, aid, assist, support" in connection with the Qoranic *naṣara* (55). In the expression *nṣr lṣlm*, the /*l*/ which has been translated as "to", may be the /*l*/ of the direct object which is frequently introduced by the preposition /*l*/ especially in Aramaic and which is also attested in Arabic (56).

Another expression in the Taymanite inscriptions, *ṣlm ltwy*, appears for example in the following inscription: *nm ḏ'b bḥgg mn sm'l ṣlm ltwy* (57). The different possibilities for the word *ltwy* have been discussed by Winnett (58), and he suggested that *ltwy* could either be the perfect or the imperative of the VIII stem from Arabic *lawā* "turn" (*iltawā, iltawi*) and translated "*Ṣalm* has turned" or "O *Ṣalm*, turn thyself". The word *ltwy* can be interpreted from the Aramaic root *lwy* "to accompany, escort", and from the Hebrew root with the same meaning (59). Furthermore, the Arabic root *lawaya*/*lawā* is used in relation to Pre-Islamic deities and it is interpreted in the Arabic lexica as *'aṭafa* "to incline, lean (toward)" and as *'akafa* "keep, devote, be addicted" and as *ittaḫaḏa* "to take, to take on". Arabs used to spend the time in worshipping a deity or devoted (the verb *'akafa* is used) themselves to it (60). Thus it may be possible to translate the inscription "by Ḏi'b son of Ḥaggāg from *sm'l*, he devoted himself to *Ṣalm*".

Ṣalm in Thamudic personal names. ṣmd'=ṣlmd' "*Ṣalm* has known" (61), *ṣml=ṣlm'l* "*Ṣalm* is god" (62), *ṣmmlḥ=ṣlmmlḥ* "*Ṣalm* is good" (63), *ṣlmn'm* "*Ṣalm* is good" (64), *ṣmkfr=ṣlmkfr* "*Ṣalm* has pardoned" (65), *ṣmrf'=ṣlmrf'* "*Ṣalm* has healed" (66), *ṣmntn=ṣlmntn* "*Ṣalm* has given" (67), *ṣmr'=ṣlmr'* "*Ṣalm* has

seen" (68), *ṣlmškr* "*Ṣalm* has been thanked" (69).

Ṣalm in the Lihyanite personal names. *ṣlmgd* "*Ṣalm* is my happiness" (70) *ṣlmyḥb* "*Ṣalm* loves" (71).

Ṣalm in South Arabia. There is no evidence of this deity in South Arabic; it may only be compared with the personal name *šmsmṣlm* (=*šms+m+ṣlm*) (72). Here *Šamš* appears to be the deity's name and *ṣlm* has to be interpreted as Akkadian "likeness".

Ṣalm among the Nabataeans. Ryckmans (73) speaks of a Nabataean deity *Ṣalam*, which might be the same deity which has been found in a Latin inscription in al-Ǧauf in North Arabia, *Sulmus* (*ṣlm*), and which is also recorded in Umm al-Ǧimāl (74).

Ṣalm in The Old Testament. *Ṣalmunna'*, LXX Σαλμανα (75) is a Midianite prince. This name must be interpreted as *ṣlm+mn'* "*Ṣalm* has saved".

II. ŚANGILĀ

The sources of śngl'

The Akkadian sources. The various suggested interpretations of *śngl'* in Akkadian are discussed below. Otherwise, this Aramaic deity is to be found in the Aramaic personal names and toponymics of the New Assyrian texts.

śngl' in personal names. These are names composed of the name of the deity *śngl'* and the Aramaic root *śg'* "many, much, great":

Saggilu: This is the name of a governor of Babylon which has the *qattil*-form; the root *śg'* is compound with the theophoric element *'l*. Brinkman interprets it as the temple name of *Marduk Esangil* (76). *Bur-*[d]*Sa-gal-e*: this is the name of the governor of Guzana and the eponym for the year 763 BC (77). This typical Aramaic name means "the son of *Saggil*". Here the divine name is written with the deity determination *DINGIR*. *Sa-gi-il-bi-'-di*: this is a name for a slave (78); it is a compound of the deity name *Saggil* and the Aramaic element *b'd* "behind" which is well known among West Semitic names. It should be noted that the divine name has no determination. *Sa-gi-il-bi-'-di*: this is the same name as above (79). *Sag-gil-da-a-a-an*: this name means "*Saggil* is judge" (80). Worthy of note is the full writing of the deity *Saggil* (=*Saggi'il*) and the fact that the theophoric name has no determination.

Sa-an-gi-Ilu(DINGIR): This name (81) is very important because of the appearance of the /*n*/ through the dissimilation of the geminates, and it is the most important personal name which correlates to the deity *śngl'* and helps us to interpret it. The writing of *sangi* for *saggi* and *DINGIR* makes it obviously certain that *Sangil/Saggil* has nothing to do with the temple name *Esangil*. The personal name *Sangi-Ilu* means "*Ilu* is great".

Sag-gi-il/lu: this name is like the name above (82). *A-a-sag-gi-i*: this name means "(the divine) *Aa* (=*ḥy*) is great" or "where (West Semitic *'y*) is the great (god)?". *E-sig-gi*: "*E* is great" (83). *Sa-ag-lu*: (84) *Ṭāb-Sa-gal*: this name (85) means "*Saggil* is good". *Sag-ga-a, Sag-gi-ia, Sa-gi-'*: these names (86) have a short form and take the form *qattil* of the root *śg'*. *Sag-gíl-t*[*ú*] has to be a feminine name to *Śaggilu* (87). *Sa-an-gi-i*: this name (88) is a short form of the name *Sa-an-gi-Ilu(DINGIR)* which is discussed above. Of importance is the dissimilation and appearance of /*n*/. *Sa-ga-tum*: this name (89) seems to have the feminine ending /*t*/ from the root *śg'*. *Su-ga-lí-a*: perhaps this name has the root (90) *śg'*.

śngl' in place names. *Sa-gi-il-lu*: this place name is attested by Tiglath-pileser III (745–

727 BC) (91) in North Syria. The writing of the same name as *Sa-an-gi-il-lu* is interesting. Deity names as place names occur often in Semitic.

śngl' in the Aramaic sources. There is no evidence of *śngl'* in the Old or Imperial Aramaic inscriptions from Syria or Mesopotamia or Egypt. The only information from this period is from the Aramaic stelae of Taymā' and then from Palmyra and Hatra and Late Aramaic.

śngl' in the Aramaic stelae of Taymā'. śngl' is found in the previously discovered stele (92), and it is mentioned after the god *Ṣalmu* as well as on the newly discovered stele (93)

śngl' in Palmyra. Here *śngl'* is found in personal names: see *bršgl* "the son *Saggil*" (94). This is the same personal name as the name attested in the New Assyrian period *Bur-^{d}Sa-gal-e* from Guzana (95). See also the woman's name *šgl* (96). Cooke (97) has suggested that it has to be connected with the deity name *śngl'*. The personal name *śg'* from Palmyra (98) can be interpreted according to the root *śg'*.

śngl' in Hatra. śngl' is found once as a divine name in the inscriptions of Hatra and in the name *lšgl'* "for *Śaggilā*" (99).

śngl' in the Late Aramaic. In the Late Aramaic texts (4/5 century BC) *śngl'* has to be identified with the angelic name *sngy'l* for example in incantation texts from Nippur (100) and *snygly* on an amulet, provenance unknown (101). The angel *Šingilan-Uthra* (*śyngl'n 'wtr'*) is attested in Mandaic (102).

The identity and etymology of śngl'

Suggestions for the identity and etymology of śngl'.1. *śngl'* is the equivalent of Aphrodite (103). Cooke compared *śngl'* with the Babylonian goddess *šgl*, who is mentioned in late Syriac sources in the lexicon of Bar Bahlul, and it is stated to be the Chaldaean equivalent of Aphrodite. *šgl* is found here together with the Babylonian deity *dlbt*. Cooke (104) accepted this as a possible interpretation. Caquot (105) discussed the problem and indicated the existence of *šgl* and the relations between the goddess *šgl* of Hatra and the Palmyrenian personal name *šgl*.

2. *śngl'* is a written form derived from *Sin-gala* (*Sin-gala*). It is proposed here that *śngl'* should be regarded as a compound of the Akkadian moon-god *Sîn*⇐*šn* and the Sumerian word *GAL*⇒*gl* "great, big". This means that *śngl'* has to be translated as "the great *Sîn*".

This proposal has been suggested from the beginning of this century and has been accepted for many decades: Cooke (106); Dussaud (107); Caskel (108); and finally Lipiński (109), "*Sîn* the great".

3. According to Lipiński (110), *śngl'* should be read as *Sīn-egallā'* and translated as "the Moon-god of the palace", or "Sîn of the palace". He interprets the first element *šn* as *Sîn* and the second element *'gl'/'glh* as *ekallu* (Akkadian, palace) in the Aramaic emphatic state. It is difficult to accept the reading of Akkadian *Sîn* as *šn* (*šīn*) in Aramaic, since there is no evidence for this written in Aramaic.

4. *śngl'* has to be explained as Akkadian *ša ekalli* "queen" and is related to the Biblical Hebrew and the Biblical Aramaic *šēgal*, which has been suggested from the beginning of this century to be the Akkadian *ša ekalli*. Caquot discussed the appearance of the deity *šgl* in Hatra and Palmyra and suggested the possibility for the relationship between *šgl* and *śngl'* (111). Millard discussed this suggestion and confirmed the interpretation of *šgl* as *ša ekalli* (112). This opinion is also supported by Kaufman (113), Fales (114) and Teixidor (115). The identification of *śngl'* as *šgl* and *ša ekalli* causes difficulties, not only because the writing of the sibilants

contradicts the rules of writing West Semitic words in Akkadian and Akkadian in Aramaic, but also because of the writing of the Akkadian *ekallu* as *'gl'*, which is uncertain. The attestation of *ekallu* in Aramaic and West Semitic from the first half of the first millennium as *hykl* speaks against the writing of *'gl'* for *ekallu*. Writing *gl'* for *ekallu* is very questionable. It is uncertain that the Biblical word *šēgal* is related to the same deity name *šgl*/*śngl'*. If this is right it must appear as *sgl*.

5. According to F. Altheim and R. Stiehl, *śngl'* has to be explained as follows: the first element is the Akkadian moon god *Sîn*, the second element the root *gly* "to uncover" (116).

6. The deity *śngl'* has been identified as *Esangil*, the name of the temple of the Babylonian god *Marduk*. This was suggested by Tallqvist at the beginning of this century (117) and supported by Vattioni (118) and Knauf (119). The temple name *Esangil* is attested in Akkadian names, but it must be demonstrated that none of these names have West Semitic elements, as in the examples in Tallqvist's works (120). The examples of the writing of the temple *Esangil* in Aramaic are always with /s/: compare the Akkadian name *Mar-E-sag-gil-lumur=Aramaic mrsglmr* (121).

7. According to Dhorme (122) *śngl'* is derived from Akkadian *šungallu*⇐*ušumgallu* "dragon" (⇒*šngl'*).

8. Leemhuis (123) has suggested that *śngl'* is a compound from *Sîn* and his wife *Ningal* (=**Sinniggal?*).

The suggestions discussed here are not entirely satisfactory but require further investigation and evidence. However, it must be kept in mind that our information about *śngl'* is restricted, and that an interpretation requires one to take into consideration the historical linguistic context. From the beginning, it must be said that there is neither an Akkadian deity called *Sagale*, nor can a deity *SIN.GAL* be found in deity lists or in personal names.

One may question why the Arab population and the small Aramaic community should worship the name of the temple of *Marduk* in Taymā'? The answer can never be found. The idea of worshipping a temple as a deity was actually unknown in Mesopotamia. The writing of a temple name with the determination *DINGIR* could be an indication that it was worshipped as a god. Since the Assyrians or Babylonians themselves did not surely practise such ideas, why should this be practised in Taymā'? A more plausible suggestion would be that *śngl'* is a compound name from the Aramaic elements *śg'*+*'l*+*'*. According to the examples of the Aramaic personal names from the cuneiform sources (e.g. *Saggil*) cited above, it is clear that *śngl'* has the *qattil*-form. The emergence of /*n*/ in this name is a dissimilation, and *śngl'* has to be translated as "the great god" or "*Il* is great". The final /'/ in *śngl'*, which is written in the cuneiform as *-e* (*Sagale*), might be the Aramaic emphatic state.

Let me first give the interpretation of the word *śg'*. This root is not found in Old Aramaic inscriptions (1000–700 BC), but it is found in Imperial Aramaic (700–300 BC) and thereafter in all Aramaic dialects and means "much, great, many" (124). Moreover, *śg'* is not only a very well-known Aramaic root, but also a typical Aramaic root among the Semitic languages. It is interesting that *śg'* always occurs as an adjective *qattīl*-form *saggi*. The appearance of *śg'* in the Old Testament has to be an Aramaization (125) and the same must be said of *śg'* in Phoenician (126). In relation to the god, *śgy'* means "great, exalted" (127). *śg'* is not found among the personal names in Old Aramaic, but it is found in the name *yśg'* in Imperial Aramaic inscriptions from Egypt (128). However, compound names with *śg'* were found in cuneiform sources in the New

Assyrian period and the Proto-Arabic inscriptions on a seal; see *s_3g'dhd* "*Dād* is great" (129). Winnett suggests that this inscription is Taymanite, and, according to his interpretation, the inscription should be read as follows: *'lyh bs_3g'dhd*, and the *b* is the Taymanite *bn* (130). Perhaps it would be better to read as follows: *'lyhb s_3g'dhd*, *'lyhb* "'*l* has given", is a typical Aramaic name. The root *śg'* is to be found in a woman's name, *sglt* "*Allāt* is great", from Gaza attested in the so-called Minaean Hierodulenlisten. However, a personal name *tsglt* "*Allāt* increases" is also found in a Thamudic inscription. Furthermore, see *'mšgy* "'*Amm* is great" in Thamudic and *šg'dd* "*Dād* is great" in Dedanite inscriptions (131). These two names seem to be of Aramaic origin.

śngl' follows the rules for writing Aramaic names and words in Akkadian, which means that Aramaic /*ś*/*š*/ appears in the written Aramaic names in Akkadian as /*s*/. This means that the writing of the Aramaic *šgl*/*śngl'* as *Saggil*/*Sangil* is correct and causes no problems with sibilants, but it is very important to distinguish between the writing of Aramaic words and personal names and the writing of loan words in Akkadian and *vice versa*.

The appearance of /*n*/ in *śngl'* is a dissimilation which emerged through the geminate *qattil*-form of *saggil*⇒*sangil*. This kind of dissimilation, well known in Middle (300 BC–200 AD) and Late Aramaic (200–700 AD), seems to be present in the Imperial Aramaic from about the beginning of the 7th century BC. This argument is supported by the writing of *śngl'* in names in the cuneiform texts, see the example: *Sa-an-gi-Ilu(DINGIR)*. However, it must be demonstrated that the Aramaic personal name for the same person *Sag-gi-lu* is also written as *Sa-an-gi-Ilū(DINGIR.MEŠ)* (132). The writing of *DINGIR.MEŠ*=*Ilū* or *Šamaš.MEŠ* has been found in the West Semitic names in New and Late Babylonian (133), which means that *Śaggilu*/*Sangi-Ilu* must be West Semitic and equates the name of the deity *śngl'* with place names. Compare also the angelic name in the incantation texts from Nippur *sngy'l*, which should be interpreted as *sg'*+*'l*. All of these examples show that both writings, namely *Saggil* and *Sangil*, are possible.

The dissimilation of the geminate in Aramaic has been discussed by several researchers (134). The Old Aramaic, in general, assimilates the /*n*/ to the next consonant. On the other hand, the /*n*/ is written in the Old Aramaic inscription of Tell al-Fakhiriya and some words in the Sfire inscriptions. In addition to these examples, see the unassimilated writing of /*n*/ in the Nerab inscriptions (135). One of the most important features of Imperial Aramaic is the writing of /*n*/ which is not assimilated to the next consonant. In Imperial Aramaic there are two cases of dissimilation to be presented: in the first one, the /*n*/ is part of the root, and the analyzed examples which we have in Imperial Aramaic indicate that most of the stems with the prefix /*n*/ are not assimilated. However, unassimilated examples are also found side by side.

In the second case, the emergence of the /*n*/ through the geminate, shown by the examples of *saggil*/ *sangil* mentioned above, has to be emphasized. Compare the following: *kkr*/*knkr*, *yn'l*, *mnsq*⇐**mssq*, root *slq* (136). The Aramaic personal name *ḥbš* **Ḫabbūšu* is another example, and it is written in the cuneiform as *Ḫa-am-bu-su* (137), which causes us to notice the appearance of /*m*/. In this context, the writing of /*n*/ in the Taymā' inscriptions without assimilating the /*n*/ is an appropriate example for the writing of *śngl'* and not for writing *śgl'* with assimilating the /*n*/. Some good examples from Hatra are the comparisons of the writing of the god of happiness, *gd'*, as *gnd'* (138) and *šnpr* for *špr* "beautiful" (139), and

also compare *ganbārā/gabbārā* in Syriac (140).

There are also some examples for the writing of /*n*/ in other Semitic languages, as in the Phoenician personal name *Sanchuniathon* **Sakkūn-yatūn* "*Sakkūn* has given" (141). Compare also the North West Semitic deity name *šgr*, which is written in the cuneiform as *Šagar/Šamgar* (142). Such words are also found in Arabic: for example *ǧandala* "to throw to the ground" from *ǧaddala* with the same meaning (143).

According to the interpretation given above, the deity name *śngl'* is a compound name from *śgy* (*saggī, sangī*) and the element *'l*. Such divine names are often found in the names of Semitic deities; compare the Aramaic deity names *rkb'l, 'lwr, byt'l* (144), the Amorite god *Yakrubil* (145), the Old Testament deity names *El šaddai, El 'olām, El Bethel* etc. (146). It has to be taken into account that compound deity names constructed from two other deity names, or double names, are found in Semitic and especially in Aramaic such as *'rqršp, 'tr'th=Atargatis* (⇐*'tr+'th*), the Palmyrenian *'glbwl* and the Arabian deity *'zzlt* "power of the goddess *Allāt*"(147). Finally, the appearance of *śngl'* as an angel in Late Aramaic is to be compared with the cult of angels in the Semitic pantheon (148).

III. AŠĪMĀ

The sources of 'šym'. There is no clear evidence of *'šym'* in cuneiform texts, unless we accept the identification of *'šym'* with the Akkadian god *Išum*, which is disputable, or with the West Semitic theophoric *Sumu* "his name". The most important evidence is found in the Aramaic texts from Taymā' and from Egypt, as well as the Biblical sources.

'šym' in Taymā'. 'šym' is found on the old stele discovered in 1880 (149) in the third position and is the same on the new stele of 1979 (150). Until the discovery of this stele, *'šym'* was only known from the Old Testament and Egypt. In Taymā' it was incorrectly read as *'šyr'*.

'šym' in the Aramaic texts from Egypt. The form *'šym'* does not appear in Aramaic texts from Egypt. However, it is found as a compound deity named *'šmbyt'l*, which is constructed of the two deity names *'šm* and *byt'l* (151). The deity *'šmbyt'l* is found together with other deities, as for example *'ntbyt'l, ḥrmbyt'l*.

'šym' in the Old Testament. 'šym' is mentioned as a deity worshipped by the people of Hamat (152), who were settled in the cities of Samaria by the kings of Assyria (153). The prophet Amos speaks in his own words as follows: "Those who swear by Ashima of Samaria" (154).

'šym' in Ugarit. The two deities *šgr* and *iṯm* are attested in Ugarit (155), indicating that there may be a relation between *'šym'* and *iṯm*.

'šym' in personal names. There is no evidence of *'šym'* in personal names in the Old Aramaic inscriptions. However, it is present in the Imperial Aramaic texts from Egypt (156). Here the following names are attested: *'šmzbd* "*'šm* has given", *'šmrm* "*'šm* is exalted", *'šmšzb* "*'šm* has saved", *'šmkdry* "*'šm* [protect] the first born" (157). These names are clearly Aramaic.

In a Phoenician seal of an unknown provenance, the name *bt'šm* "daughter of *'šm*" is attested (158). The script could also be Aramaic. A personal name *'šm* is also attested in Palmyra (159).

The etymology and identity of 'šym'

'šym' has been the subject of discussion from the beginning of this century. Vincent (160)

gathered the suggestions and examined them, and Aimé-Geron (161) also discussed the possibilities for the etymology and the explanation of this deity and the possibility of its connection with the theophoric element *šm/sumu* "his name" in West Semitic personal names and with the Aramaic deity *smy'*. It has been suggested that *'šym'* must be explained according to the Semitic word *'šm/šm* "name". The prosthetic /'/ is attested in Old Aramaic. *'šym'* indicates a *qatīl*-form, possibly also a *qatīla*-form. *'šym'* has the same nominal form as the Canaanite goddess *'šyr'*. A North West Semitic (Aramaic) deity *ḥrm*, which is mentioned as *Ḥarīm* in the early Semitic pantheon (162), shows a *qatīl*-form. The attestation of the double names of the deities *'ntbyt'l*, *'šmbyt'l* and *ḥrmbyt'l* in Aramaic texts from Egypt is an important proof of the *'šym'* origin. We know *byt'l* as a god and that *'nt* was a goddess. It seems to be that *'šym'* and *ḥrm* were goddesses as well. The ending /'/ in *'šym'* could be either the Aramaic emphatic state or the feminine ending.

Conclusion

The attestation of these deities *Ṣalm*, *Śangilā* and *Ašīmā* together in Taymā' has allowed us to speak of a kind of deity pantheon. This trias is a developed stage in the life of an important city, Taymā', a stage not to be found in the bedouin life. However, it is known in Aramaic cultural centers like Harran, Zinǧirli and in North Arabic centers like Dūmat al-Ǧandal. The fact that Taymā' was well known in the time of the Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BC) indicates that the cultural and commercial relations with Taymā' were developed, and afterwards were strengthened during the period of Nabonidus (555–539 BC). It is possible that the Aramaic deities were introduced to Taymā' as early as the time of Tiglath-pileser III and worshipped before the sojourn of Nabonidus in Taymā'.

Aramaic deities were adopted by the North Arabs as early as the 8th century BC, for example *'Atar-šamain* in Dūmat al-Ǧandal. Another example is the Palmyrenian deity *'glbwl*, which is attested in Lihyanite as *'glbwn*.

Ṣalm has to be considered to be of Aramaic origin, adopted by North Arabs. The etymology and the locality of *Ṣalm*, *Śangilā* and *Ašīmā*, the oldest attestation of these deities being in North Syria, make it possible that these Aramaic deities were introduced to Taymā' from North Syria through the trade route. The sources indicate that *Ṣalm* was a sun deity. *Śangilā* seems to be a moon deity, which was important in North Syria. There are some indications that *Ašīmā* was a goddess. According to this information, *Ašīmā* can be considered as the deity Venus.

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